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ABSTRACT

This document describes the training needs of in-company trainers of young people in Italy. Chapter 1 describes job training in Italy, the evolution of training processes, job training support methods, and the practical situation within the company. Chapter 2 describes the research methodology used, including interviews with more than 20 expert witnesses and responses of more than 100 company trainers to a structured questionnaire. Chapter 3 describes youth training and the trainer's role, training methods for new recruits, and the organization of training for young people. Chapter 4 provides the findings of the survey of in-company trainers. Chapter 5 describes potential problem areas for in-house trainers in the national context. Recommendations are provided in Chapter 6, with a summary of the project in Chapter 7. A 21-item bibliography in Italian is included. Appendices that are in the Italian version of the report are not included, but can be requested. (CML)

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CEDEFOP Document

The training needs of in-company trainers engaged in the training of young people in Italy

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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The training needs of in-company trainers engaged in the training of young people in Italy

ISFOL
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C E D E F O P I N T R O D U C T I O N

This report on the training of the in-company trainer of young people is one of a series of national reports on this subject, commissioned by CEDEFOP and financed jointly by CEDEFOP and a national authority. Reports were completed during 1988 on the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom. They are now being published in the original language and English and French. Further studies have been launched in relation to Luxembourg and the Netherlands, while a synthesis report is also being prepared.

CEDEFOP's work on the training of trainers before these series of studies were launched was of a fairly general nature. A series of national reports on the professional situation and training of trainers in the Member States Communities was published in 1983 and 1984. We have also prepared a paper on the subject at the invi ation of the Commission for the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training. In December 1987 a seminar was held to see how national public training authorities organised the training and updating of trainers whom they themselves employed in their own training centres.

The generally accepted v.ew that alternance systems of education and training, such as apprenticeship, the German dual system, contrats formation-emploi etc., should and can play a major role in the improvement of training provision in the future, has often failed to take account of the key questions of whether there are enough trainers with appropriate training and experience within companies to ensure the quality of company-based training in such systems. Hence when a proposal for a study on this subject was made by the (then) Manpower Services Commission in the United Kingdom, CEDEFOP responded positively. CEDEFOP was particularly interested because the original proposal emphasised the value of ensuring a strong Community dimension, with the possibility of cooperation between the research teams involved. As can be seen from the report, each of the national research teams was able to visit two other countries and follow a programme there organised by the research team in that country. There were also three meetings at Community level, the last of which discussed the draft reports. The final reports were prepared on the basis of comments made by colleagues at this meeting. It will nevertheless be noted that the reports are essentially national reports, i.e. written by a research team on or about the systems and problems of their country. The Community dimension although acknowledged by all those concerned to have been of value, does not come through in the reports as clearly as had initially been hoped. To some extent this is not surprising, the arrangements for training of trainers reflect not only the general approach to education and training in the country concerned, but also its economic structure and state of development.

It will be seen that in effect, of the six countries concerned in the initial study only in the Federal Republic of Germany is there any legislative provision which regulates the situation. In Germany one can only be a trainer within the dual system, even on a part time basis, if one has fulfilled certain conditions. In other Member States, there is no legislative conditions, although in the United Kingdom, for example, there is a provision for controlling the quality of training provided, including the quality of the trainers, before organisations receive approved training status in the Youth Training Scheme.

The reports also show the great difficulty in arriving at satisfactory and comprehensible definitions. Even within the defined area of study, it was found that there are very many different groups of trainers, depending upon issues such as the size of the companies concerned, the organisation of the companies' training arrangements etc.

The difficulties encountered underline the obstacles to any overall Community action in this field. However all the participants in the exercise were as convinced at the end as at the beginning, of the need for much greater attention to be paid by companies and public authorities to improving the quality of the trainers of young people, and CEDEFOP will continue its work in this field.

Enrique Retuerto de la Torre
Deputy Director

Berlin, March 1989

I S F O L - Istituto per lo sviluppo della
formazione professionale dei lavoratori

THE TRAINING NEEDS OF IN-COMPANY TRAINERS ENGAGED IN THE TRAINING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Research Report produced for CEDEFOP

ROME

ROME, July 1988

This report has been produced for CEDEFOP (project 11.1017) in cooperation with A.P. Analisi e Previsioni s.r.l., Turin.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Job training in Italy

In Italy, progress with job training schemes and with the debate, research and public-sector measures in this field has been somewhat intermittent. There have been periods of heated debate on the issue and attempts to introduce reforms, followed by periods in which interest has faded and measures have been allowed to lapse.

For a long time (or at least up to the late 1960s), vocational training was seen as a public-sector responsibility, something that happens outside the workplace and is separate from business and industry, as a general rule being run along the same lines as the State school system. These were the years that saw the introduction of in-house training units in the leading Italian companies, for example in Fiat, Olivetti and Riv. Most of them prepared and trained young skilled workers. They were closed down in the late 1960s.

Later on the prevailing concept was almost the reverse: the company was regarded as the ideal place for training. In 1973, for example, at a conference organized by ASFOR (Associazione tra gli Istituti per la Formazione - the Association of training institutes), Umberto Agnelli, the chairman of Fiat Car Division at the time, said in the opening address that the gap between industry and the school could not be bridged, and so what was needed was a vocational training system outside the school and management education outside the university (1).

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(1) See B. Maggi Il dibattito sulla formazione tra il '70 e l'80 (The debate on training in the 1970s and 1980s), in "Sviluppo del personale e contrattazione sindacale" (Personnel development and union negotiations), a supplement to "Sviluppo e Organizzazione", no. 84, July/August 1984.

The most recent model to emerge has been "polycentric". There has been a growing demand for many places and people to be involved in the process of training, using methods both formal and informal, and these have increasingly come into existence.

In educating and training people for jobs, at first the aim had tended to be to meet the requirements expressed by industry (industrial literacy) through apprenticeship and vocational training consortia. The trend that then came to prevail was to reinforce the basic education of the least able groups. In the late 1960s, vocational training outside the school was regarded mainly as a channel for remedial education for whose who had dropped out of the ordinary school system, and during that time the methods used by the training system were similar to those used in schools.

The third and last phase has seen a revived interest in the job itself, with the focus on the content of work, although inevitably it has been difficult to define the salient features of job qualifications. The aim has been to impart specific skills and the ability to perform roles (through knowledge and motivation).

1.2 The evolution of training processes

As we have pointed out, in Italy fashions in the approach to and management of training have fluctuated. These cycles or phases have been observed in both in-company training and the provision of training outside industry (2).

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(2) Pier Luigi Amletta: Formazione: una missione e due sfide - (Training: one mission, two challenges), "L'Impresa", no. 5/1986.

Very generally, there can be said to be several stages in this evolution:

- Reconstruction (from the immediate post-war years to the 1960s), a stage when the institutional training system was expected to turn out "products" that could be put to immediate use in industry. In the workplace, skills were still being passed on from older to younger workers by the methods characteristic of small craft workshops.

- Expansion (up to the 1970s), when the institutional training system was becoming detached from industry, which concentrated on imparting specialist skills. In-company training was regarded mainly as a perk, especially for middle-ranking and senior people such as executives and managers, without necessarily being relevant to the jobs they did (giving rise to the expression "apparent training").

- Crisis: the theory was that training institutions should not be influenced by the labour market. Industry was regarded as incapable of upgrading the quality of manpower in that it was concerned solely with the volume of work.

  Management models borrowed from the English-speaking world prevailed in the workplace; in-house training started to be consolidated, its main purpose being to support the individual (manager) and to structure groups.

- Technological innovation: in institutional circles there was a return to a concern for relating training more closely to work, due to the pressure exerted by the high levels of unemployment, especially among young people. Attempts were made to align training policies with labour policies.

In the workplace, the main concern tended to be skills, knowing how to do things and behaviour. Training took on an increasingly autonomous role in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. The difference compared with former stages was that training was no longer confined to the large industrial multinationals: it became a structural part of the large service companies and even made its appearance in medium-sized concerns.

1.3 Job training support measures

We have already described how the problems of unemployment became a focal concern in introducing vocational training measures. This development took place, however, in a context in which training policy measures and employment policy measures were often seen as interchangeable.

The most significant legislation in support of training, especially in giving young people their first experience of work, was Law 25 of 1955 on the recruitment of apprentices, Law 845 of 1978 on work experience placements and Law 863 of 1984 on training/employment contracts.

In the final analysis the Italian legislation regulates and gives varying forms of support for three models of workplace training: apprenticeship, the training/employment contract and practical work experience.

The first two of the three take the form of contracts of employment under which a person receives from the employer, in return for his labour, not just pay but also - at least in theory - training.

With practical work experience or an in-company placement, on the other hand, there is no contract of employment: the young person is not employed by the company but is a student on a mainly theoretical training course.

There are very few incentives for in-company placements; all that is offered is the payment of accident insurance by the regional authorities. There are, on the other hand, considerable incentives for training/employment contracts and for apprenticeship, both financial and in streamlining the regulations.

It should be pointed out that over the course of recent years apprenticeship and the training/employment contract have gradually become very similar institutions.

The training/employment contract, then, has become the main instrument in Italy for promoting job training for young people and to help them enter the working world. The reason for saying that it is this contract rather than apprenticeship that is the main instrument, even though the latter has served as a starting point for some 400,000 young people, is that apprenticeship offers little that is new in terms of training. It tends merely to be a way of helping young people find their first jobs, despite various attempts to upgrade the training provided (through management/union agreements, local training ventures, etc.).

Another point to be made is that the legislation on training/employment contracts is currently being revised. The lawmakers are redefining the reference framework with a view to placing greater emphasis on training aspects, taking a closer look at ways of encouraging these contracts.

As things now stand, the main incentive that employers are offered for training/employment contracts is the easing of regulations, for example by allowing them to choose who they recruit rather than being allocated people from a placement list, and permitting them to recruit people for a specified period. The financial incentive, on the other hand, is that the authorities pay part of the social security contributions. A young person hired under a training/employment contract, for example, costs the employer about 28% less than a worker hired in the normal way (3).

The total number of people finding permanent employment following a training/employment contract has been as follows:

from 1 February 1983 to 31.1.1984:	162,442	
1984	14,916	(4)
1985	108,434	
1986	229,235	
1987	400,000	(5)

Looking at the figures for 1986, we find that 60% of young people taken on after training/employment contracts were male, and a clear majority (67.5%) were in the 19-24 age group. Of these young people, 62.8% had left school at the minimum school-leaving age, 35.3% had a certificate of upper secondary education and 1.8% had a degree.

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(3) See ISFOL: Prima indagine nazionale sugli esiti dei contratti di formazione e lavoro (First national survey on the results of the training/employment contract), A. Bulgarelli and M. Giovine, Rome, 23.11.1987.

(4) The drop in 1984 was due to uncertainty in that year as to the regulations on the training/employment contract.

(5) Provisional figure.

Most of these youngsters were taken on by industrial concerns (61.23%), with the status of manual workers in 64.7% of the cases and non-manual workers in the remaining 35.3% of cases.

Almost 72% of these young people found jobs with small or very small firms with fewer than 50 employees, 18.5% with employers having a work force of 50-249, 5.1% with companies with 250-499 employees and the remaining 4.4% with concerns employing a work force of over 500.

It should be pointed out, however, that it is the training/employment contract that gives rise to most confusion between the aim of providing employment and the aim of providing training, mainly to the detriment of the latter.

Finally, the support for young people's job training given out of the European Social Fund should not be overlooked. In many cases this support was to an extent combined with regulations permitting training/employment contracts. In 1985, a total of 350,000 youngsters were involved in schemes financed by the Fund (6).

To sum up, measures in Italy in support of work training for young people tend on the whole to be in the form of financial support. Responsibility for the provision of training is left to the employers, who may then look to the regional authorities (although instances of this happening are fairly rare) or run training on their own or, less commonly, with the help of outside consultants.

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(6) ISFOL Report, 1986, Franco Angeli, Milan.

Although there is formal provision for certifying the standards achieved as a result of this training (the qualification is entered in the person's employment record card), in practical terms this has little significance.

It should also be pointed out that the difficulties encountered by the unions in dealing with the subject of training have worked to the detriment of training. With rare exceptions, it has been only an incidental issue in union demands for job security or grading structures. In few collective labour agreements has the subject been systematically dealt with, and in even fewer cases has there been provision for direct participation by workers' representatives in the management of training; the cases in which this has occurred has been in the building industry, in insurance and in banking.

The same situation has obtained in company-level negotiations. A report by CESOS has shown that vocational training was covered by only 10% of in-company management/union agreements in 1984-85, despite the fact that this was a time of complex company reorganization.

1.4 The practical situation within the company

In Italy, training in general - and the training of newly recruited youngsters in particular - is still not a highly structured activity. It tends to be very casual, although (as we have seen) there have been plenty of explicit incentives to promote such training.

The (fairly sparse) research that has been conducted in recent years on employers' needs (7) has all highlighted the great obstacles to developing management, technical and vocational training for existing and newly recruited employees, even though the technological and organizational changes being introduced in (and/or occasionally forced on) companies nearly always need to be backed by the retraining of human resources. The main difficulties encountered have been:

the lack of human resources planning, or the difficulties of such planning;

the lack of financial resources;

lack of time (time often being the most critical factor for the entrepreneur and a company's managerial staff);

the difficulty, especially among small industrial firms, in retaining highly skilled personnel because of the lure exercised by large companies.

The research to which we have referred, however empirical, has revealed how widely Italy's industry and economy has been permeated by technological, organizational and production innovation. This has created a growing need even among small and medium-sized undertakings for a work force that can optimize their substantial investment in technology, although the need has not always resulted in a structured demand for training.

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(7) La direzione dei personale (Personnel management), Assolombarda, Hay Italiana, Istud, 1982.
1986 survey on the demand for training: ASFOR.

In looking for skilled staff who will help to make optimum use of the potential of new technology, employers are implicitly expressing the close relationship between innovation, technology transfer, the investment in human resources and the demand for training.

Companies are opting for a variety of channels in acquiring new forms of technological knowledge. In outline, these are:

- relations with the suppliers of plant and machinery, machine tools, etc;
- relations with customers and sales network;
- relations with the suppliers of raw materials and semi-finished products;
- participation in trade fairs, exhibitions, seminars, etc;
- recruitment of specialist staff;
- attendance of training courses.

This all-invading, irreversible technological change does not merely imply the replacement of human labour by machines; it calls for a massive new commitment of human resources. "New technology tends to demand and induce new skills, and therefore new forms of training, and the school system is no longer enough to create these resources on its own. The need is to 'coordinate' and 'involve' a whole range of services and jobs that meet the need for vocational skills corresponding to the aim of 'self-fulfilment', the building up of specific new skills calling for new work structures and a continuing link between training and work. All the aspirations and expectations found at every point in our lives are expanding and changing the relations between training, the production system and society." (8).

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(8) Confindustria: Innovazione, Formazione, Sviluppo (Innovation, training and development), Rome, SIPI, 1986.

Small and medium-sized industrial concerns are still much less aware of the importance of training than are large companies, and they are far less aware than their counterparts in other countries.

A far-reaching marketing, information and awareness campaign is needed to encourage and promote training and innovative training methods that will help to solve some of the problems faced by companies.

Whether training can be institutionalized within companies depends on:

- the degree to which the activity is systematically conducted;
- the existence of a "training section", in other words a specific organizational unit with clear-cut responsibilities and expertise in this field, as well as the time for which this section has existed;
- the presence of permanent teaching resources, in other words a training centre or areas that can be used primarily for the purpose of instruction.

At present, the need is to "upgrade skills to the job being done" or to "develop potential so that the expected requirements can be met". In the future, however, the explicit need will be to "upgrade skills to keep abreast of technological progress" or to "bring the company's attitude and approach in line with the socio-political development of the environment".

This would seem to confirm the feeling that Italy's economic fabric is expanding and that companies are rediscovering - following a period of restructuring and reorganization - the need to develop human resources as part of a global strategy. As things now stand in Italy, however, little attention is still being paid to training problems. Only among medium-sized and large companies are there specific schemes, although even these appear to be directed mainly towards the more highly skilled (graduates). In general, there is little effort to place training on a formal footing, due to the lack of a training department or a training budget, difficulty in determining the cost of training, etc.

There is, then, a tendency for companies, especially in the manufacturing industries, to rely on their own resources rather than to look outside for training. A greater openness to the training available from outside sources, on the other hand, is apparent in the service industry, both in the traditional branches such as banking and insurance and in leading-edge companies such as engineering firms and software houses.

The limitations on training encountered in general are in some ways even greater when we look at the training of young people and newly recruited employees. Briefly there can be said to be three reasons why it has proved impossible to place the training for apprentices and young people under training/employment contracts on a proper footing in Italy:

a) there is little motivation among entrepreneurs to resort to training outside their firms;

b) most firms see training as having only a minor strategic role;

c) the training on offer is inadequate or non-existent.

Basically there are two "constraints" on the introduction of training, particularly in small and medium-sized undertakings:

a) the cultural models are those of "affiliation", centring on the proprietor and his family;

b) the cost of training is too high for the firm's resources.

The end result is a far more diversified general picture of company training than in other European countries.

The certification of vocational qualifications obtained through the institutional training channels or in-house is, as has been pointed out, more a matter of form than of substance. This means that even when training is in fact given, especially in-house, it tends to be informal.

Nor is the work done by in-company trainers very formal: most of them do other jobs as well, and their work of helping young people start up in their jobs receives very little recognition.

2. Research Methodology

To verify in practical terms the problems that are encountered in the provision of training designed to help young people on their entry into the working world, we conducted a field survey consisting of two parts: a qualitative analysis in the form of in-depth interviews with more than 20 expert witnesses; and a quantitative analysis, with over 100 company trainers replying to a structured questionnaire.

Our work, it should be pointed out, was hampered by the fact that the literature on the specific subject is so sparse, what does exist being extremely heterogeneous. There are no systematic analyses of the training that companies provide with specific reference to the integration of young people. The material available is mainly on management training, basically referring to large companies. There are relatively few discussions and analyses of the experience of small and medium-sized companies.

In this context, the conduct of the research in cooperation with experts from other European countries (especially researchers from the Federal German Republic and the Republic of Ireland) gave us an opportunity to arrange useful and interesting meetings with company training experts. These meetings, preceding the phase of actual analysis, were in the form of seminars and workshops attended by the various research teams, experts and company managers, consultants and experts from service firms, offering them a forum to discuss the subjects of our research.

Lastly, through guided visits to companies with significant experience of training we were able to define the research hypotheses more clearly and better identify the people who should be interviewed and the expert witnesses who should be involved.

The expert witnesses were chosen from among personnel officers and training officers in companies of all sizes - large, medium-sized and small - in the manufacturing industries and the service sector. The companies selected for interviews were those explicitly providing training, a selection facilitated by the information passed on to us by trade and employers' associations.

The aim of the interviews in the first place was to obtain facts and figures on our interviewees' practical experience with young people's training arranged in the companies in which they worked at the time of the interview. The discussion was then broadened to the field of youth training in general, asking interviewees not only about their responsibilities in their own jobs but also about their knowledge of the subject and their perceptions of the general issues.

A number of companies were then chosen for direct research on trainers. The expert witnesses who had previously been interviewed were employed in some of these companies, and we were therefore able to compare their opinions and perceptions of the in-company training system.

Here again, a structured questionnaire was used as the research tool. Replies to the questionnaire were obtained through direct contact with the trainers (in some cases, the company's management was responsible for involving the trainers). This approach was adopted both to accelerate the research and so as not to leave the choice of people replying to the questionnaire to chance. Had other arrangements been employed, for example sending questionnaires by post or putting questions over the telephone, it would have taken longer to recover the questionnaires and we could not have been absolutely certain of the suitability of the respondents.

3. Youth training and the trainers' role

3.1 Training methods for new recruits

Our analyses confirmed that few firms in Italy have training schemes, if by training we mean structured measures whereby people acquire new concepts and put them to the practical test.

It has also been found that training varies in direct relation to the innovations - technological, organizational or management - introduced by companies. All the experts interviewed stressed the links between innovation, the integration of new employees (young people) and training.

Companies often interpret the concept of training in different ways. Most of the firms regard "structured training" as on a par with school-type, full-time courses, but above all as implying that they have to defer to decisions by outside agents as to the location, timing and content of training.

The most worrying factor is the separation between work and training.

Employers seem unwilling to accept the training proposed unless they themselves define - or help to define - the needs, the training path and its breakdown. They are suspicious of standard training packages that do not take into account their specific problems, their expectations of what training will do for them, the nature of the work force to be trained and the degree to which new technology fits in with the way their work is organized.

It is no coincidence that not even those firms availing themselves of grants from the European Social Fund define that experience of training as structured.

Where courses have been planned and implemented with the backing of outside technicians and consultants, the project has still been managed by the company itself. Decisions on the implementation of training have had to be endorsed by management, which has reached a compromise between training goals and production goals, between training methods and the specific method of production within the company.

As a result, even though a course model may be made more cumbersome by red tape and the restrictions imposed by the regional departments for vocational training and by the European Community on the presentation of applications and accounts, provided that the course is flexible and compatible with the company's requirements and well integrated in the production flow it is "experienced" and judged by employers to be unstructured.

Since a company's rate of production is to a great extent determined by external factors such as its contracts, plant breakdowns, the state of its order book and the money market, working hours do not lend themselves to long-term internal planning, nor can they be forced to comply with rigid outside arrangements. If training is to be feasible, in other words, it must be flexible enough to fit in with these "turbulent working patterns".

Looking at the figures to see how systematic is the provision of training, it may be observed that:

the groups receiving the most systematic training are the upper echelons (management);

training is most common, although not always systematic, among employees with the highest levels of education.

Training also tends to be more systematic in:

multinationals;
public-sector companies;
medium-to-large and large companies (1,000-2,000 employees);
companies in the sophisticated service sector.

Little progress is being made towards creating training departments in their own right, especially in small, domestic and private-sector companies.

It is of interest that the threshold above which the need for a training department is accepted unquestioningly is the company with a work force of over 5,000. As a result, training often performs the role of providing consultancy for the hierarchy. Only in multinationals does the decision-making role appear to be directly related to institutionalization; in smaller companies and those with private-sector capital, training is less institutionalized and has a greater decision-making role. In most cases, the aim of training is also to facilitate the introduction of a change.

Regarding the content of training, the points to be made are that:

a. training in the company's relations with its environment is mainly to be found at senior management level;

b. training for a position or set of duties is most common among managers and executives, although it varies a good deal in extent;

c. training in socio-organizational matters is to be found at every level of the organization;

d. skill training (practical training) is mainly to be found among manual and non-manual workers who are to work on practical jobs, and among new recruits.

Companies engaged in structured training state that they have the basic resources to manage the training activity, but these resources are still regarded as not nearly specific enough and much too rough-and-ready, requiring further refinement. Training is being planned, but the planning tends to be global and to consist mainly of allocating financial resources to the various users.

The lack of methodologies (instruments and procedures) restricts and hampers the work of analysing needs and evaluating results. In many cases, analysis means merely the analysis conducted by the people responsible for training facilities, which is rarely verified by the people directly concerned, while evaluation consists merely of compiling general views on the training while it is being imparted (filling in questionnaires at the end of a course), and there is almost never any systematic follow-up.

Companies, especially industrial companies, tend to opt for the training provided by the technology supplier because it it more geared to the machine or installation being supplied and because the courses are more concentrated and more flexible in that they are scheduled in the light of the company's needs.

It is of interest that the producers of technology have gradually come to be expert in training and are the ones to organize themselves adequately for this purpose. At the beginning, there used to be a few people who would, at the time of installing equipment on a customer's premises, train the personnel there to use it. This has led to the creation of actual training centres that are developing instruction methods and training technology.

In general, companies are well disposed towards - sometimes, as we shall see below, actively interested in - training models of a specifically "company" type, the main parameter being the trend towards integration with the company's own organizational methods. This is one of the reasons for taking on young people with a vocational qualification under a training/employment contract. However good young people's school education may be, employers feel that they need ad hoc training based on the company's own methods of organization and attitudes.

In short, employers regard the training of new recruits as mainly instruction in the equipment they operate and the job they are to do and as ensuring that they fit into their role.

There is a general feeling that a young person who has just been taken on is willing to fill in the gaps (some of them serious) in his or her basic education and training.

As was previously shown by the survey on "company training methodologies and the training/employment contract", "the absence of prior work experience is not necessarily regarded as a negative factor; indeed, in quite a few cases, it is seen as desirable". It seems that the time and cost of fully integrating the young person - the acquisition of new knowledge and procedures, adapting to an environment that is very different from the school, the acquisition of a mentality oriented towards the learning of theoretical concepts and familiarity with sequences of operations leading to practical, material effects - are more acceptable to the employer than the risk of a more experienced and skilled worker failing to integrate. Several respondents pointed out that young people, due to the very fact that they are young and are more accustomed to study and abstract thought, create fewer problems in the training phase than do employees with far more work experience.

For new recruits, training means both familiarization with the practical content of the job or jobs they are to do and assimilation of a role model. That model is not just hierarchical; it is above all productive and "social", the social environment being the workplace.

The reason for the widespread trend towards "training autarchy" that has ensued is not only the lack of standardization of training processes but also the aim of "moulding" the recruit to the behaviour patterns and values prevailing in a given workplace, easing the young person into his job more smoothly.

Individual employers, then, set up and run training for new recruits drawing on their own internal resources. Methodological shortcomings are overcome by non-traditional means, resorting to an accumulation of practical experience in problem management (or variance recuperation). A significant role is performed by the foreman or, in a smaller firm, the shopfloor or office worker who supports the entrepreneur and works with him in training the new recruit and "putting him on the right path".

For young people entering firms in the manufacturing industries (and, as we have seen from the figures on "job training contracts", this is still the field in which most young people start work), training - in the current sense of the term - boils down to the practical transfer of skills. Theoretical knowledge is conveyed as a complement to practical training in, for example, handling a machine tool. Models of behaviour are not taught but are held up as a positive value within the workplace environment and, as such, acquired by assimilation.

When we look at training procedures, the event giving rise to training, what is expected from training and the results achieved, and then compare them with the employer's level of technology, what emerges is a significant typology of employers' behaviour patterns.

Casual training

This is to be found in companies in which training is regarded solely as instruction in the use of specific instruments or equipment that have been introduced in the workplace as needed, in an uncoordinated manner.

The characteristic feature of such training is that it is random, being left to the discretion of the firm selling or manufacturing the technology being acquired.

Usually this training is given to only a few members of the work force, mainly the operator who is to use the equipment. In the space of two or three days he has to acquire a completely new approach to the use of equipment and is forced to organize his own work, often in a way that does not complement the work done at the stations next to him.

Explicit training

This is found in companies previously adopting the casual approach to training, or even those that have had training forced upon them, and which - due to the consensus and willingness of the operator concerned or the entrepreneur/manager, or to gradual changes in management functions that have created a context in which greater importance is attached to retraining and refresher training - have in a sense been "converted" to training.

On occasions this quantum leap has coincided with the recruitment of a specialist technician capable of developing projects that meet the company's needs, where necessary supporting new recruits and helping them to overcome day-to-day difficulties in coping with the projects, and gradually training other members of the work force in complementary tasks.

Strategic training

This form of training is to be found in companies investing in new products and production technologies, based on thorough background research and using a highly skilled work force whose training is constantly being updated.

Training is imparted not just to newcomers but to all employees in turn. It is broken down into modules targeted towards new production technology and modules targeted towards changes in product specifications and in the reference market.

Usually it consists of courses on the premises of the companies manufacturing the technologies being used (e.g. the producers of electronic components), national and international conferences and internal seminars directed towards homogeneous groups (management, designers, agents) or interdisciplinary teams (from the estimator to the warehouse manager and the production managers).

A premium is placed on training, which is regarded as the prerequisite for maintaining the company in a specific (usually high-calibre) segment of its market.

Training costs are placed under the heading of investment outlay.

Decisions on initial and refresher training for employees and its coordination are taken by the entrepreneur or senior management.

In practice, only in a few instances are there decision-making procedures that include seminar-type phases in which the managers of the various areas involved also perform horizontal roles. Where this does happen it tends to be in innovative, high-technology companies in which areas and functions are characteristically interdependent - for example, the manufacturers of prototypes or non-standard machine tools.

3.2 The organization of training for young people

The practical organization of training is, as we have seen, very loosely structured. Even in those companies having a unit for the formal coordination of training measures, rarely is there a strategic training plan. Training, especially on the theoretical side, is often given in an almost casual way, in some cases outside normal working hours. The production of teaching materials is often empirical.

As in the phase in which the newcomer learns by working alongside an experienced worker, training methods in other phases are entirely traditional: courses are held in a classroom, where the instruction is very much along the same lines as in school; there is nothing new of note in the way of teaching aids; usually overhead projectors are used and pieces of paper handed out. It is virtually unknown for personal computers to be employed for instruction and only rarely is there recourse to simulation exercises and group work on projects.

In general, new recruits are trained in a practical phase during which they are attached to an expert worker, under the supervision of the area or sector manager.

The subjects covered in the theoretical phase of training, which is usually far less substantial than the practical phase, are:

- the company and its organization
- the equipment and technology it uses
- the production process
- the company's products or services

It is generally assumed that young people have already acquired the theoretical/technical side of the subject during their education and training at school. In some cases, when it becomes apparent from practical experience that there are gaps in a young person's knowledge, they are filled by ad hoc remedial measures.

Small firms still tend to impart training mainly by the traditional method of attaching the newcomer to a seasoned worker. In larger and very forward-looking companies, though, a new model appears to be emerging: training new workers for the "roles" they are to assume in the company system rather than for specific jobs.

In many cases growing attention is being paid to the quality of the products and services being offered. In training newly recruited employees, not only are the traditional subjects of training included and updated (for example, health and safety at work) but other topics are also incorporated, relating to the optimization of the plant or procedures that help to define quality standards for services. Flexibility in the performance of work, a quality that will promote the aim of functional versatility, is something to which large companies in particular attach great importance. To this end, methods are being developed whereby young people work on a series of jobs in turn, generating an ability to step into jobs that are not confined to rigidly defined areas.

In the light of research on young in-company trainees (9) and discussions on the occasion of this research, it is apparent that the opinions of the young people involved in this job training process are very positive.

Most of them have learned to perform the jobs they are required to do through the support of their superiors and colleagues at their work post.

Only a tiny minority have gone through training that includes the teaching of theory.

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(9) ISFOL Prima indagine sugli esiti dei contratti di formazione e lavoro [Preliminary survey on the results of the training/employment contracts] (op. cit.).

Most youngsters report that they have learned "enough" during the time of their introduction to work. A far smaller number state that they have learned little or nothing, or on the other hand that they have learned "a good deal".

The reactions of in-company trainees, at least as regards their introduction to the working world under training/employment contracts, then, are positive on the whole, although it is very likely that this assessment has been strongly influenced by the opportunities for permanent employment to which training/employment contracts lead.

The reactions also seem to be closely correlated with the educational qualifications possessed by young people at the time of recruitment. Young graduates and diploma-holders are those who feel they have acquired significant job expertise and ability. This is further confirmation that in-company training is an opportunity that tends to be offered more to people already having a high standard of school education and other qualifications.

It fits into this picture that the young people declaring themselves to be most satisfied are those who have been directed towards white-collar employment.

As already mentioned, there are hardly any people whose only job is to train. Only in a very few companies are they to be found, as for instance in large industrial concerns, usually members of multi-national groups, or large companies in the traditional service industries, or banks and insurance companies.

The job of training is usually assigned to personnel with a good deal of professional experience and a thorough knowledge of the company. These people normally train others as well as doing their own job, inevitably adding to their workload since they have to make up for the time spent on training young people.

The processes of rationalization that have been taking place over the past few years have further reduced the ability to employ someone solely on training, or even on the coordination of training.

The selection of who is to train seems to be entirely informal even in companies where training has become highly formalised.

Trainers, especially those called upon to supervise young people newly recruited to the company, are chosen on the basis of their specialist knowledge and the company system. An ability to teach or cope with a group of trainees in the classroom is seldom considered relevant.

Companies seem to have difficulties in making this choice. The problems of identifying special people to monitor training arise not only from organizational considerations associated with the size of companies and the resources available to them but also from the rapid obsolescence of know-how. In other words, almost every employer feels it would be inappropriate to assign someone to training if he has been away from routine work for a long time, since he would no longer be able to transmit the knowledge needed in coping with practical day-to-day workplace technology.

Part-time training also seems to give rise to preliminary problems. Some employers report a growing reluctance, especially among technicians, to take on the commitment of personally supervising the

training of others. There are several reasons: as already pointed out, it adds to their workload; this activity keeps them away from their normal work; and, with a few exceptions, there is no direct or indirect incentive for such training work.

A significant working solution adopted by one of the employers interviewed is to construct more or less standard training paths: the knowledge of senior technicians is tapped, but the training is imparted by what might be called company "communicators", who are concerned less with the content of training than with the way it is imparted.

The nature of trainers seems to be closely linked with the way in which training is given in companies and the degree to which training has been formalized within those companies:

- in those companies in which training is "casual", trainers tend to be informal, operating on an occasional and often improvised basis in their management of the introduction of youngsters to work; they tend to be senior people within the company and in the job they do rather than highly skilled in their profession.
- in companies in which training has become a strategic factor and in essence has been formalized, trainers work on a semi-informal basis (operating part-time);
- in companies in which training and the company unit coordinating and administering that training have achieved full recognition (as in large industrial and service companies, multinationals), trainers tend to be formal, with their own roles and jobs.

It should be pointed out, however, that as progress is made towards formalization of the function and role of trainers there is also a gradual shift in the work they do: they are involved not so much in actually training recruits as in the planning and coordination of training. At the same time the "tutor" is making his appearance, supervising the attachment of young people to experienced workers in the workplace; in such cases, recourse to outside teaching agencies for theoretical training is becoming more common.

It is very rare for a trainer to be recognized as such. Only in large companies is training recognized and therefore remunerated (even when it is only part of a person's job).

Training is often linked with hierarchical roles. Rarely is it viewed as a career in its own right, but it is implicit in upward career moves.

Finally, in-company trainers are seldom offered the opportunity for their own training, particularly in teaching methods and techniques, although it is fairly common for them to go on technical/specialist courses, usually linked with their normal occupational role rather than their role as trainers. This means that trainers borrow their own teaching methods and aids from the specialist courses they attend, for which there are more and more opportunities (these are usually offered by the suppliers of technology).

4. The findings of the survey of in-company trainers

To obtain details of the specific problems facing in-company trainers, 100 trainers working in various companies were asked to reply to a structured questionnaire.

Table 1 below shows the sectors of the economy in which the companies employing the trainers operate:

Sector	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
Manufacturing industries	76	76.0
Advanced services	4	4.0
Traditional services	10	10.0
Commercial services	10	10.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

Table 2 is a breakdown of trainers by size of their employers, as revealed in the course of the interviews.

Size, in terms of number employed	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
< 49	6	6.0
50-199	9	9.0
200-499	6	6.0
500-1,000	19	19.0
> 1,000	60	60.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

From this table it is apparent that most of the trainers interviewed worked in large industrial concerns. The low proportion of trainers working in small firms is a result of the methodology used and the practical situation that we have already described. Since we had decided to interview people actually engaged on training, it was inevitable that this picture should emerge: as we have pointed out, it is hard to find trainers working for small employers.

An analysis of some of the characteristics of trainers shows that they tend to have worked for their employers for a fairly long time (see Table 3 below), more than 44% having worked in the same company for more than ten years. This means that they are in the older age groups: 48% were aged 36 to 45, 17% were in the 46-55 age bracket and nobody was under 26.

These figures confirm that, in order to work as a trainer, a major factor is that the person should be thoroughly acquainted with the situation in the company.

Table 3 - Number of years in which trainers have worked in their company.

Years	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
< 3	7	7.0
4-5	11	11.0
6-10	29	29.0
11-20	44	44.0
> 20	9	9.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

The findings on the position of trainers within the company was further confirmation that training is not a very formal activity: only 9% were at general and personnel management level, whereas the largest group (34%) were directly engaged in production work (in the sense of producing either goods or services). The trainers working on production services (maintenance, technical support, etc.) accounted for 19%. It is significant that 13% of the trainers worked on the marketing side, evidence that employers make the strategic but harder decision to place young people in the sales area, so that they need a fair number of people who can pass on what is regarded as fairly complex specific knowledge. Very few trainers, on the other hand, work in administration, data processing or general services (the total is only just 2%).

Table 4 shows the role normally performed by these trainers.

Size, in terms of number employed	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
Managers	3	3.0
Engineers	23	23.0
Coordinators	50	50.0
Office staff	21	21.0
Skilled manual workers	1	1.0
Consultants	2	2.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

These figures also confirm that it is the people with supervisory and coordinating jobs who are most likely to be involved in training, such as workshop foremen and office managers. The educational standard of these trainers, then, is fairly high: 27% have a degree,

45% have an upper secondary school leaving certificate, 17% have a qualification from vocational training institutes or centres, and only 9% have only a lower secondary education certificate.

Training seems to be predominantly a man's job, since only 11% of the people with this role were women, even though the companies in which we conducted interviews had a substantial proportion of women employees (the companies included textile concerns, retailing firms, banks and insurance companies).

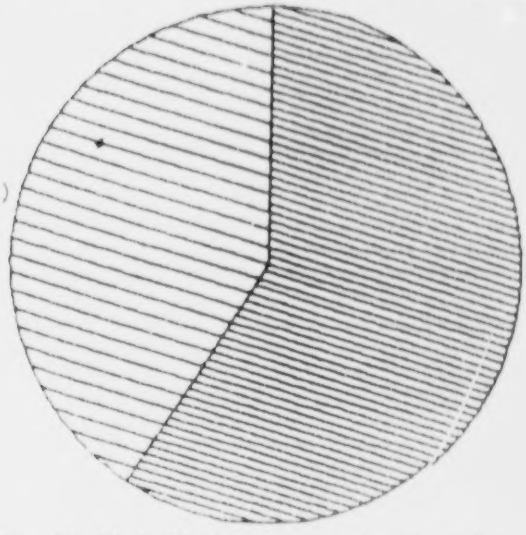
The link between the role of the trainer and coordination work or the purely technical jobs may be the reason for women being so poorly represented. Career opportunities for female employees are still extremely sparse. There are virtually no women in technical jobs or in production services such as maintenance and design.

Even though the trainers interviewed had been with their employers for a long time, they had been in their current posts for relatively short periods: 40% for less than 3 years, 27% for 3 to 5 years. It could almost be said that training is a task generally given to personnel who are highly experienced but have only recently reached the position they now hold. This means that the period for which they have actually been engaged in training is also short, with 70% having done training work for less than 3 years and 16% for 4-5 years.

Few of the interviewees - 18% - had any experience of training before their current job. Most of this experience had been acquired in other private-sector firms, and it had been very short in duration. It is obvious that prior experience of training had not been a major requirement in the careers of the people we interviewed.

The following pie chart shows the proportion of trainers who had received at least some training before doing that work.

Graph 1



The finding, then, is that although a majority of people have been given the wherewithal to carry out their training role, many people have not been trained in any way. It should also be borne in mind that only 41% had attended meetings or seminars on training in the course of the previous three years. In other words, there seem to be only limited opportunities for general or refresher training. Basically the individual trainers have to rely on their own abilities and intelligence to solve the problems that undoubtedly arise.

Taking a closer look at the procedures for this training of trainers, however, we find other factors that indicate all the problems in this activity. Of those stating that they had attended training sessions, 49.2% said that these totalled over 3 weeks (although they represented only 29% of the total universe of trainers interviewed), and 15.3% said that the sessions had totalled 2 to 3 weeks.

Table 5 - Interviewees who had been trained to train

	No. trainers interviewed	% Distribution	
		total no. of replies	affirmative replies
Yes, a few days	7	7.0	11.9
Yes, 1 week	14	14.0	23.7
Yes, 2-3 weeks	9	9.0	.15.3
Yes, over 3 weeks	29	29.0	.49.2
No	41	41.0	-
T o t a l	100	100.0	100.0

In 40% of cases it was stated that all the training had been conducted in the company; 31% of the interviewees who had received training said that it had been given solely by experts within their company, whereas 17% had been trained by both in-house and outside experts.

Table 6: Where trainers had been trained

Place of training	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
In-house	40	40.0
Training centre for the industry	8	8.0
At a vocational training centre or public body	2	2.0
Private training centre	3	3.0
Part in-house, part outside	4	4.0
In another company	2	2.0
No training	41	41.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

Table 7 - Who trained the trainers

	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
In-company experts	31	31.0
Experts from other companies	3	3.0
University teachers	1	1.0
Outside consultants	7	7.0
In-house and outside experts	17	17.0
No training	41	41.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

Analyzing the content of the training for trainers, we find that a clear majority of those trained had attended courses and seminars designed to improve the technical and specialist skills entailed in the jobs and role they performed in the company rather than to teach them how to train. Only 37.9% of those trained said that the courses they had attended were on training techniques, for example teaching methods, communication or course management.

The overall picture of how trainers are trained shows that companies are somewhat haphazard in the arrangements they make, that the role of the trainer is not very autonomous and that thinking on the subject is based mainly on the practical aspects.

The stress on familiarization with machines and procedures is not, then, confined to the introduction of young people into the work-place, as has already been described; it is characteristic of the management strategies in general on which that introduction is based.

Even when it comes to training the trainers, technical and technological aspects are essentially taken as the basis, whereas didactic and psychological aspects (course management, communication, teaching methods and aids, etc.) seem to be of secondary importance.

The trainers were also asked questions designed to elicit their opinions on their own jobs.

Table 8 - Working arrangement preferred

	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
Own work only	20	20.0
Mainly training	18	18.0
Training as well as own work	61	61.0
No reply	1	1.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

Table 9 - Trainers expecting to continue training in the future

	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
YES	93	93.0
NO	7	7.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

Tables 8 and 9 show that about 20% of those interviewed would prefer to do only their own job, but only 7% did not expect to continue to train in the future. This finding is probably evidence of the difficulties these people encounter in keeping abreast of their ordinary

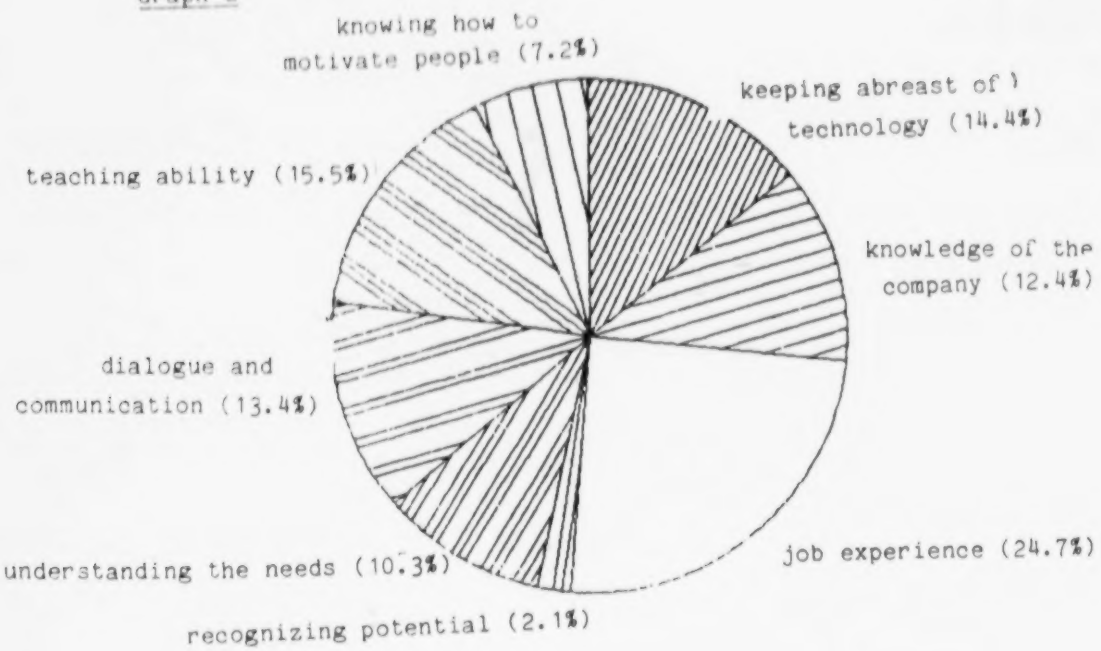
work and at the same time training young people entering the company. As we have seen, employers themselves report a substantial increase in the workload due to the accumulation of these commitments. Two factors in this negative view are probably the lack of recognition for the activity in the form of higher earnings, and the fact that training work does not improve a person's career prospects. It is almost as if the work of integrating young people into their new jobs is a toll to be paid rather than a normal, recognized activity.

It should be borne in mind, however, that 25% of interviewees preferred the arrangement whereby training was their main work in the company, even though this group consisted in essence of trainers in companies that had put training on a structured, formal footing.

Most people, even so, said they were prepared to continue with the experience of training, and 25% expected it to become their main activity; on the other hand, 68% felt that they would continue to work as trainers part-time, in other words at the same time as performing other tasks within the company.

In entering into the merits of training work, interviewees were asked what they felt they needed in order to do their job of training and integrating young people properly. A variety of replies were given, as shown by the chart on the following page.

Graph 2



If we lump together those who regarded the essential factors in the work of training as keeping abreast of specialist technology, broad experience of the job and a thorough knowledge of the company, we find that 20% of the interviewees referred specifically to the work situation. This is undoubtedly a significant proportion, but it is considerably lower than the percentage of interviewees who had been trained essentially in technical and vocational subjects, which it will be recalled was 56.5%.

The remaining 20.5% (3% did not reply) regarded as essential for a good trainer factors specifically related to the transfer of knowledge, particularly the ability to discuss, communicate and interpret youngsters' needs and potential, even though few of them had themselves been trained to know about, interpret and use these factors.

When the interviewees were again asked to list in order the factors they felt were most important in the work of training young people, a "good knowledge of the company system" still came first in the list, but it is significant that in second place came "ability as a trainer", well ahead of "keeping abreast of the content of skills".

It can be stated, then, that according to employers' strategic thinking the training of new recruits is closely correlated with the specific jobs they will be doing; at the same time, however, the trainers - who have to translate that strategic thinking into practice - take a rather different view. On the whole they share the company's views, but they seem to be increasingly aware of more purely didactic aspects. Knowing the job well is not regarded as enough in training new recruits: besides the "sound" job skills (which are still seen as vital) there is a growing need for those specific skills without which it is hard, if not almost impossible, to convey the knowledge the trainees need in order to do the job.

Table 10 - Opinion as to whether specific training is needed for young people

	No. of trainers interviewed	Distribution %
Yes, more technical knowledge is needed	5	4.0
Yes, more awareness of the company situation is needed	10	10.0
Yes, a special effort is needed for the integration of young people	11	11.0
Yes, they need to be motivated more	10	10.0
Yes, they need to learn how to work as part of a group	2	2.0
Yes, they need specific teaching methods	8	8.0
NO	55	55.0
T o t a l	100	100.0

Among the interviewees, 45% felt that the training methods that should be used for young people differ from the methods used with other personnel. The contrary view - that new recruits do not need specific training methods - was held by 55% of those interviewed.

It is of interest that a clear-cut majority of those trainers who feel that specific training is needed for young people advocate factors linked less with the technical and practical side of work than with methods and the psychology of learning.

Table 11 - Factors supporting the trainer's work

	Trainers interviewed	% distribution	
		Total no. of replies	Affirmative replies
Refresher training in general	15	15.0	22.1
Technical refresher training	6	6.0	8.8
Refresher training in theory	1	1.0	2.5
Refresher training in teaching methods	10	10.0	14.7
More links with other departments	15	15.0	22.1
Better teaching aids	8	8.0	11.8
More links with other trainers	9	9.0	13.2
Knowing more about company goals	3	3.0	4.4
Incentives	1	1.0	1.5
No reply	32	32.0	-
T o t a l	100	100.0	100.0

Finally, looking at what the trainers regarded as the support they needed in their training work, there was - as is evident from Table 11 - a general demand for continuous refresher training. This demand is not met in practice, since (as we have already described) trainers rarely attend courses, nor do they go to regular meetings on the subject of training.

Analyzing this demand for further training, we find that only 15% of respondents expressed the need in general terms, but the demand for refresher training in teaching methods was greater than the demand for more technical and specialist knowledge.

The high percentage of trainers who would like closer links with other departments in the company is striking. If these replies are added to the demand to know more about needed of company goals, the percentage is fairly substantial, perhaps denoting a measure of unease. This unease may well be traced back to the problem - already discussed at length - that training has not been placed on a formal footing, and to the way in which training adds to the workload. It is obvious that the organizational problems created within the work process are seldom understood by the people upstream or downstream from the area into which the young people are being introduced.

5. In-house trainers in the national context. Potential problem areas

If we were to single out the most significant factors that have emerged in the course of our research, we would point to the following:

a) The great diversity of training, due in part to the highly varied pattern of business and industry in Italy.

In Italy, most people in employment work in very small firms (more than 44% for employers with a work force of fewer than 20). This is certainly one reason why we found so little in-house training for young people in the country.

Nevertheless, in recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of training schemes due to the efforts of bodies operating in these sectors, such as associations of small craft firms and traders. Although they are primarily designed to develop and reinforce entrepreneurial skills, to a growing extent they are also being used as a reference in setting up training schemes for newly recruited young people, in many cases involving a group of employers.

When these ventures are developed directly for entrepreneurs they serve as a medium for winning broader acceptance of training and its value in helping to meet the growing needs, especially those created by the widespread introduction of new technology into even the smallest firm.

The pattern of training also varies according to the ownership of companies.

In companies in the public sector, there is a considerable measure of joint union/management concern for training. The recent (1984) protocol agreements between union bodies and the companies in which the State has a holding are a sign that the time is ripe for the development of vocational guidance and training ventures for young people and adults already in employment.

In the private sector, medium-sized and large companies are - as we have discussed at length - increasingly prepared to develop good schemes for their newly recruited employees. Significant training activities have also been developed by firms in the cooperative movement, which is a strong force in Italy in not only agriculture and the agri-food processing industry but also the service sector and manufacturing industries.

Lastly, in specific sectors such as building, printing and insurance, joint management/union bodies are setting up and running training schemes, including initial and refresher training for in-company trainers.

It is of interest that most providers of training (for specific target groups or direct to anyone who wants it) have come into existence or started to operate since the early 1980s. This confirms and explains the interviewees' statements that they had only recently been involved in training: previously there had been no training, and therefore no staff acting as trainers before them.

b) The gradual polarization of two separate types of trainer:

(i) the full-time trainer with a high standard of education (a degree), who has not necessarily been with the company for a long time. To a growing extent his job is to analyse the needs,

design training paths, support the technical and practical instructors and monitor and verify the achievement of the teaching and training goals.

(ii) the part-time trainer with a medium or lower level of education who has been with his company for a considerable time, often in a coordinating or supervisory role, and who is highly skilled technically and in his own job. This person is likely to be very much in touch with his own work in the company and concerned to relate the training closely to developments in the company's production processes.

Only a very small proportion of type (ii) trainers are women, whereas there are more opportunities for women wanting to become type (i) full-time trainers.

As we have discussed, the training of trainers seems to be occasional rather than regular. On the whole it is generated by private-sector providers such as consultancy and management training firms, national training agencies and training companies set up by large company groups and associations of small and medium-sized firms.

There is no evidence of any training being provided for trainers by the State education system or the universities. There are few opportunities for an exchange between the public-sector training system for which the regional authorities are responsible and the in-company training system, such as alternance schemes under which young trainees go to companies for a period of practical experience.

6. Recommendations

From a review of the Italian context and in the light of our research and an international comparative review, certain suggestions could be made as to the action that could be taken by local and national authorities and the European Commission, either in turn or simultaneously. Our recommendations are made with due regard for the territorial scope of measures, their institutional structure and the availability of resources.

6.1 Action at local level

By "local level" we mean either metropolitan areas or the placement districts defined by Law 56/87 or metropolitan areas; "local" is, however, a reasonably coherent area that is smaller than the region.

a. Promote consortia of small and medium-sized firms with a view to providing training and consultancy services to member firms. To an extent such consortia already exist in the most significant areas of Italy, sometimes in the form of joint consortia of companies and local authorities, some of which subscribe part of the capital. The consortia are companies formed under private law, possibly in the form of cooperatives, in which training consultants and planners operate. Many Italian regions grant such service consortia special tax concessions.

b. Arrange meetings between vocational training centres, upper secondary schools (but not only technical schools) and local firms on subjects of common interest, above all the subject of the forms of training that young people need, with the involvement of teachers, trainers and company executives.

c. Promote training for entrepreneurs who run small firms. One purpose of such training schemes, promoted by the regional authorities and put on with the support of local associations of entrepreneurs, would be to overcome the prejudice that exists towards training and create a more positive attitude.

d. Pool experience of vocational and in-company training in the course of promoting local industry (trade fairs, conferences and meetings arranged with the financial support of local agencies, etc.).

6.2 Action at regional level

a. Survey and periodically check on training needs and the quality and quantity of the resources available to small and medium-sized firms for training young people. Ongoing research could be promoted and funded by the regional authorities, with the help (perhaps in the form of sponsorship) of employers' associations, especially industrial employers.

b. The providers of vocational training could arrange joint refresher and specialist seminars for company trainers, trainers from training centres and managers. The fact that different kinds of practitioners attend the same session would in itself help to break down the barriers that exist in practice.

c. Promote postgraduate training seminars for young people interested in a career as trainers, especially within companies. In Italy thought has recently been devoted to the feasibility of setting up a "Master's degree in training" for executives working in personnel

management. A good deal of the study could be based on distance training methods, learning from the ventures that have been launched at Community level.

d. Under regional programmes for the implementation of employment policies, encourage small and medium-sized firms and consortia of those firms to recruit staff for the job of training. The examples set by other European countries might be followed by offering incentives for the recruitment of highly qualified technical and scientific staff by small and medium-sized enterprises. An example is grants to small firms that hire young graduates, in the form of a percentage of their salaries for the first year or two.

e. Promote meetings between management and unions, without confining this contact to the time when they are required to consult each other on the formulation of annual or multiannual training plans. The purpose would be to review the status of in-company training (needs, experience, resources). These meetings, which could be promoted by the Commissione Regionale per l'Impiego (regional committee on employment), would be in the nature of preliminary fact-finding and analysis rather than negotiating sessions.

f. Encourage trainers in companies and those working in training agencies to change places to extend their technical knowledge and their ability to teach and to communicate.

6.3 Action at national level

a. Promote meetings designed to bring about a recognition of the strategic role of the part-time trainer.

b. Promote ventures designed to bring about a recognition of the social role of the (in-company) trainer. This is a very important objective, and efforts to achieve it call for the involvement of institutions, employers, the unions and the trainers' own associations.

c. Set standards of quality for the practitioners concerned. Defining profiles may make it easier to consider the resources available, exchanges at national and international level and the choice of individual training paths. Once professional standards are set, employers and unions may devote more attention to the subject in national-level bargaining and include the "trainer's job" in the graded list of jobs and pay and salary scales.

d. Identify "leader companies" that have made an exceptional investment in training, especially those that supply both capital goods and training services to third parties. Italian and Community authorities could promote a review of and experimentation in training processes and the training of trainers, drawing on the experience acquired by even medium-sized companies engaged in technology transfer. By looking at what is already being done, helpful ideas could be gained about the various models for the transfer of knowledge such as behavioural systems, languages, symbols and the structure and representation of messages.

e. Draw up an "inventory" of training opportunities and training paths for trainers, both full- and part-time (technicians and professionals). This inventory could be drawn up by ISFOL for Italy and by CEDEFOP for the European Community.

6.4 Action at European level

a. Identify a specific role for the European Social Fund in the basic and refresher training of in-house trainers. This would pave the way for renewed efforts to qualify company executives as part-time trainers, with due regard for the comments above on "leader companies".

b. Promote a wide-ranging exchange of in-company trainers, at first under Community projects such as Eurotecnet, Fast, Sprint and Comett.

c. Provide training paths that are integrated at European level, drawing on existing resources for the training of trainers in the various countries, with due regard for the professional standards for the various job profiles that have emerged and been examined in the course of research by CEDEFOP and others.

d. Promote a system for the circulation of specific information for in-company trainers. Draw up the inventory proposed above; CEDEFOP could make the documents produced in experimental schemes available to companies.

e. CEDEFOP could set up a permanent area for research on the subject of training in smaller firms, in conjunction with the European Commission's SME Task Force.

ISFOL - Istituto per lo Sviluppo della
Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori

CEDEFOP Research Report Summary (Programme 11.1017)

THE TRAINING NEEDS OF IN-COMPANY TRAINERS ENGAGED ON THE LONG-TERM TRAINING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN MEDIUM-SIZED UNDERTAKINGS

Rome, July 1988

In-company trainers: the profiles emerging

A "diptych"

The picture that emerges from current research* on the structural features of in-company training and trends in that training is like a "diptych" showing two models of training, one on either side.

In describing these two typical situations, the size of the enterprise is still a very significant factor, although other factors clearly have a bearing as well: turnover, capital assets, the size of the work force, breakdown of employees by skill groups, product technology and its scientific content, the product mix, etc.** Since our purpose in presenting the hypotheses is heuristic, we feel it would be helpful to place the medium-sized (M) enterprise at the centre of our typology. In the context with which we are concerned, we can define the medium-sized enterprise in terms of the number of people it employs, 100 to 500.

a. The MSE (Medium-to-Small Enterprise) Model

In medium-sized/small enterprises, the method of training is essentially "casual". When the need for training arises the entrepreneur or the person in charge of the technical side, based on analyses of one or more combinations of two factors, man and machine (a new machine = new skills), looks to the producer of the technology to acquire new skills. Training is not always perceived as a need, either for new recruits to the enterprise or for existing workers who have to acquire additional skills so that they can work on more sophisticated processing techniques. There is nobody in the company in charge of training and there is no explicit job of developing human resources. The job of training is done by manual workers and technicians who are very skilled in their own work and have been with the company for a long time. There is little concern for helping youngsters find their feet in the company and in their working group.

The technical knowledge is transferred in several stages:

1. Technicians or skilled workers are sent to the companies that make the capital equipment;

2. They undergo total-immersion training in the technology-producing centres;
3. They acquire knowledge and expertise;
4. They learn new models of behaviour;
5. Back in the workplace, a small learning group is formed; in this phase, it is fairly common for the group to include young people. The returning technicians teach the group according to the models of training they have acquired and assimilated in the course of their own training.

The procedure is repeated whenever the need for innovation becomes apparent. A good deal of "company memory" is accumulated through these periods of training. The "instruction" of youngsters by adults is regarded as one of the company's "normal" activities. The most common forms of communication are in fact the informal models. Minimal written materials are used, if any. The companies most exposed to change, those whose product has a high technological and scientific content, welcome opportunities for exchanges with other providers of know-how.

In the smaller undertakings, prejudice against training is still commonly found. Training is regarded as being couched in the language of the classroom, as theoretical, as remote from real life and unrelated to experience. In small firms young people are usually trained under the watchful eye of the small entrepreneur and nobody uses or feels the need to use terms such as vocational training, vocational skills, qualifications, roles, etc. Not until the setting up of entrepreneurial training schemes***, and even then only as a perhaps unpremeditated side-effect, do small entrepreneurs start to modify their attitudes and take an interest in the explicit market for vocational training.

Only in recent years has the process of raising the level of company skills been like this. Formerly, technicians and/or more highly skilled workers from a company acquiring a new technology had the opportunity to learn a new operating technique in their own workplace. In other words, the training process took place on the customer's premises. The stress was on acquiring just enough of whatever ability was needed to make the machine or machines work properly. In time this method was found to have its shortcomings:

there was a risk of disrupting the "virtuous circle" of chain-type training, since what it did not provide were "rich" models of training. The current trend (to go to the manufacturers to train in the company's technical capital assets of the future) coincides with an investment in in-company trainers working in these undertakings, perhaps even on a part-time basis.

The gradual shift in emphasis also coincides with a rise in the level of training capacity within the system, although the intrinsic relationships between theory and practice are still not clear in the technical and vocational training that is available.

a. The MLE (Medium-to-Large Enterprise) Model

Today the larger enterprises are moving away from organizational behaviour patterns whereby training needs are essentially met out of their internal resources, using methods not dissimilar to those described in the case of MSEs; they are trying to identify a strategic job of training. Almost all these companies have put the job of training on a formal footing, attributing specific tasks to the personnel department (over the past five years, this department has become far less concerned with the problems of dealing with the unions and more concerned with the problems of internal mobility and integrating young people in the enterprise).

The company has a few professionals specifically engaged on the work of training. Such trainers go under many names, but they usually fall under one of two headings: full-time trainers, who may well be young, graduates and experts in planning and communication; and highly skilled workers who are employed part-time as trainers both for newly recruited young people and to upgrade the skills of those already working for the company.

In general terms, these companies have become far more aware of training over the past five years, and they have certainly made a financial investment, sometimes quite substantial. In most cases, they have decided not to tap public or European Community funds because of the difficulty of access and because their needs were too impelling to wait until the training services could be provided.

Once the strategic value of training workers was realised, all the "sound" medium-to-large enterprises were - and still are - faced with the problem of choosing and motivating potential trainers, and then organizing the time, method and place of training.

The greatest difficulty that companies are encountering today is not to find those people best able to perform the trainer's role but rather to motivate them to move away from their customary jobs within the organization, even for short periods. In former times, when organizational patterns were less explicit, there was scope for moving workers around to do different jobs; in MLFs, rationalization has almost universally reduced that flexibility. Today the highly skilled people who serve as part-time trainers for other people still have to fit in their own work at odd hours, and they have to cope with the degree of rigidity in an organizational structure that is supposed to be flexible, at least on paper.

The first problem in connection with the training environment and the equipment to be used for training, especially in training new recruits, is solved not by setting up more in-company vocational training centres, as used to happen in many large enterprises in the past, but by setting apart special areas for training on the shop floor itself. For only a few specific technologies in which in-company training is given (for example hydraulic and pneumatic technology, or refrigeration) are teaching aids available that are closely related to the production methods used there - in other words, "simulation training".

In-company trainers

At this moment in time, in-company trainers are hard to define and hard to identify within enterprises, for reasons closely linked with the points we have discussed.

In very small undertakings, training is not regarded as such and is not called by that name, even though an outside observer will clearly perceive it to be training. The entrepreneur is the sole person responsible for the introduction of newcomers into the firm, since his responsibilities include the selection of applicants, indoctrination, efforts to motivate employees, support, upgrading of skills, etc. Even so, he does not necessarily regard himself as a trainer.

In SMEs, the workshop foremen or those in charge of the various areas of activity are aware that they are performing a training function, especially at the time of introducing new recruits to the job as part of an apprenticeship arrangement or under a training/employment contract. Even so that role is not always formally recognized or stated as one of their terms of reference.

In LMEs, trainers are given various titles, as listed below.

A. Trainers, staff working full-time on the job, recruited specifically for that work within the personnel department. Their career prospects differ, mainly depending on their origin. If they come from within the company and have been there for a long time and if they are good at communication and relating to others, they may return to management duties, even on the production side. If they are young graduates recruited as trainers, their career development prospects will be restricted to the personnel department.

B. Tutors, or those who supervise the integration of new recruits, in close liaison with the training department.

C. Supporters ("affiancatori"), facilitators ("facilitatori") and transferors ("trasferitori") are tutors with certain special characteristics, the names by which they are known having evolved as a result of the history, experience and aspirations of the company in which they work. "Facilitators" are to be found in certain undertakings that are experienced in the use of Quality Circles".**** "Transferors" is a term used in companies where the introduction of new technology and scientific innovation creates major problems, where acclimatization to change is a recurring and continuous need, not just for young people but for existing employees as well.

D. Instructors are the people who still survive where there are workshops or areas suitably equipped for skill training. They tend to be people with lengthy experience who have come up from the shop floor, and it would be hard to transfer them to the context of the small firm or the SME.

All these practitioners are lumped together under the general title of trainers; the mix of skills and terms of reference is such as to point to two different profiles:

Profile A: the full-time trainer with a high standard of education (a degree), although not necessarily very senior in the company. To an increasing extent his tasks are to analyse the needs, plan training paths, support the theoretical and practical instructors and verify and monitor the achievement of teaching and training goals.

Profile B: the part-time trainer with a medium-to-lower standard of education, who has been with his company for a long time, often working in a supervisory role and with a high degree of technical and vocational skill. This type of trainer is still very close to his own job and is therefore concerned to keep in close touch with the development of production processes within the company.

In the larger enterprise, the existence of a formal training job means in practice that it employs one or more full-time trainers. They are the prerequisite for the creation of a network of part-time trainers who can be brought in when specific needs arise. Nevertheless, these types of professional do not always exist in every situation, the main factor being the degree to which company training systems are open to outside training opportunities. Service sector companies are far more likely to look to outside sources (training firms, experts, consultants and individual trainers) than are companies in the manufacturing industry, which even today are highly "autarchic" in their development of human resources.

The main function of in-company trainers, especially in dealing with new recruits, will be, as in the recent past, to set a "standard" of knowledge and skills that can then be attained by a series of measures designed to "mould" the individual according to the company's unwritten codes and ethos.

If this tendency towards defining and developing the two trainer profiles continues, various problems will arise regarding the preliminary training, recruitment and integration of trainers within the company and their exchange between different training systems (public-sector, private-sector and mixed systems, joint management/union systems, etc.).

There are two separate labour markets for trainers and various routes of access to training roles, as has been pointed out. Employers prefer people who have grown with the company and are known to be open-minded and able to relate to others. LMFs have put the job of training on a formal footing, since the rationalization of production in the course of the 1980s. SMEs have - like small firms - reinforced or set up associations or consortia that make people (trainers) available to companies, most of whom have themselves trained to be consultants or training planners.

The rise and professional improvement of in-company trainers reflect the enrichment of companies' technological assets and their impact in creating new problems of placement in certain market segments.

The "casual" style and behaviour of most of the firms engaged in training are also characteristic of the training of in-company trainers. The content of their training is on the whole the same, vocationally and technically, as for the workers they are to train; they receive almost no instruction in teaching methods and skills. Specialist training for trainers is virtually unknown in universities. The only opportunities for basic and refresher training for trainers are those offered to companies and individuals by management training firms and consortia or the Associazione Italiana Formatori (AIF - Italian trainers' association).

Almost the only exchanges between different training systems are the visits by or placements for youngsters from upper secondary school and the public vocational education system, and even then - as is obvious - only where such schemes materialize (in practice in the North, only rarely in regions in Central and Southern Italy). This encounter between public-sector and in-company training systems gives trainers from the two areas an opportunity to see, understand and interpret the organizational behaviour patterns and cultural models that have evolved as a result of widely different factors.

Because of the persisting difficulties of relating the different areas of training, it is still very hard to plan one or more strategies whereby the in-company training system can be used to improve the job skills of workers, especially in the training they receive before starting work.

There are various possible courses of action:

1. The growing awareness of training to be observed among entrepreneurs reflects not only technological innovation but also the rationalization of organization.

2. Although rationalization leads to the creation of a training role within LMEs, it detracts from flexibility in the use of the more highly skilled members of the work force (since the expert workers are ever more vital to the company).

3. Employers are convinced that the most effective on-the-job training is the type that involves the more highly skilled members of the work force as part-time trainers. They feel that one element in planning a training strategy is that it should be less visible. Training is effective if it can be set up quickly wherever it is needed, if it is tailor-made, using outside sources only in exceptional circumstances and always under the close supervision of the managers within the company; in its implementation, thought should be given to the disruption of organization and production. When training is organized by a specific, formal in-company unit, if it is well planned it will be barely visible, merely seeming to be one of the routine changes in the availability of the various recipients of training, in space and time.

4. SMEs are still not sufficiently attractive to be taken into consideration as providing job opportunities for potential full-time trainers. "Profile A" trainers aspire to jobs in LMEs and in the larger institutions, as demonstrated by the fact that a high proportion are employed in those associations and private institutions that work for small or medium-sized firms, but they are still not employed individually by those SMEs.

5. In LMEs, highly skilled part-time trainers are becoming more reluctant to take on commitments which take them away from their main technical jobs even for a few weeks, since they often have to make up for the work that they have had to leave, considerably adding to their work load.

6. It is unusual for trainers to receive special remuneration, even in companies where importance is attached to training. Where incentives and special allowances are offered, they do not seem to be attractive enough to motivate the more skilled workers.

7. SMEs agree that companies do not have sufficient resources of their own to set up ad hoc training projects.

8. Recourse to the European Social Fund is not a winning strategy for SMEs, and for LMEs it is a reasonable strategy only in special circumstances (where the company is in crisis, where technological trends can be predicted well in advance, where the companies can advance the cash for the training, where they can shorten the time required for recourse to new know-how, etc.). Companies that obtain grants from the European Social Fund can be regarded as merely a particular sub-group inhabiting pockets of a protected market, either because they are in excellent health or because they are in deep crisis.

Even from this brief discussion one summary finding emerges: the companies that can provide their own efficient internal training often "mask" their training, since they have to cope with fluctuations on their various markets. There is a risk that the resources they possess and that they could place at the disposal of the training system in general may not even be available to themselves because of the difficulty of finding trainers (of either profile in the case of SMEs).

The low visibility of in-company training makes it difficult to arrange an exchange with formally established and highly institutionalized systems; it also creates problems in gathering information on current trends.

To promote an exchange between the public training system and the in-company training system and to make the latter more accessible:

- a public strategy of supporting those companies with certain characteristic elements could be implemented by recognizing training practitioners as resources for the system in general;
- consortium-type joint arrangements could be set up between centres, institutions and companies (or associations of those companies);

- there could be investment in experimental training schemes for trainers in situations outside the company;
- the base - in other words the number of employers placing training on a formal footing - could be broadened by giving grants to SMEs for setting up training services either on their own or in conjunction with other firms, more particularly grants for recruiting full-time trainers in SMEs;
- there could be recognition for the role in the training of trainers performed by the producers of technology and capital equipment, and for their work in being the prime generators and the first link in the chain of transmission of know-how;
- management and unions could be made more aware of the role of part-time trainers and, during collective bargaining, they could devote special attention to the "mixed" professionals that may emerge.

Notes:

* The discussion that follows reflects thinking in the light of the information acquired (through in-depth discussions with training officials in companies, replies to questionnaires by in-company trainers and study seminars) under the research project promoted by CEDEFOP, Berlin, and other current ISFOL research on specific branches of activity.

** The general definition of an SME used by the European Commission in Brussels, as set out in the Resolution of November 1986 is "an enterprise whose work force does not exceed 500, whose net fixed assets amount to less than 75 million ECU, with no more than a third of its capital being owned by a larger enterprise".

*** In this case, reference is made to the enormous number of schemes being set up in various sectors of the economy by trade associations, national or local, directed towards small and very small entrepreneurs such as farmers, traders, craftsmen and small industrial firms. The meetings, in the form of seminars, tackle such subjects as taxation, administration in general and management. They are important occasions for socialization and the acquisition of new attitudes.

**** Facilitators, according to the US and Japanese philosophy of Quality Circles and Quality Control Cycles, are those employees - usually technical and administrative managers - who work to develop new circles, in close liaison with personnel department.

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The training needs of in-company trainers engaged in the training of young people in Italy

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